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THE
SPIRIT OF WORSHIP
IN ALL AGES:

BEING
THOUGHTS ON WORSHIP AND ORDINANCES;

COMMENDED
TO THE PRAYERFUL CONSIDERATION OF ALL
PROFESSING CHRISTIANS,

BY
ONE WHO SEEKS TO FIND IN ALL, SOME POINTS OF UNION
IN THE TRUE LIFE.

" And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.
And let him that heareth say, Come:
And let him that is athirst, Come:
And whosoever will,
Let him take the water of life freely."

LONDON:
A. W. BENNETT, 5, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT;
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THE following pages are affectionately addressed to all bearing the Christian name, that they may be induced more closely to consider whether their worship of the Father is based on the true ground of all acceptable worship, viz, "in spirit and in truth;" or whether it be in anywise mingled with the precepts or traditions or mere customs of men, and consequently capable of being purified from some defilement either of the flesh or spirit in the sight of God; that they be brought into a greater realization of that spiritual freedom which rightfully pertains to the children of God; but into which we can only be introduced by the Spirit of the Son of God.

"If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—JOHN viii. 36.

"Now the Lord is that Spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."—2 COR. iii. 17.

11

THE SPIRIT OF WORSHIP

IN ALL AGES.

I. IF we would rightly treat of "WORSHIP," and the end or use of "ORDINANCES" as connected therewith, we must first correctly understand *what* worship is. I take it to be the acknowledgment and adoration of that Being, in whom we believe that we live, from whom we have sprung, by whom we are sustained, and to whom we look for our eternal reward.

Hence Worship is the sequence of Faith; as is beautifully expressed in the words, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews xi. 6). But Faith is based on Revelation, and is indeed so intimately connected therewith, that in one sense the spirit of faith and of revelation may be said to be one and the same thing; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God:" and whether we regard this as spoken of the outward Word, or of that more inward Word wherewith God speaks to us by his Spirit in the heart, the consequence is equally the same: hence we may argue, that

according to our knowledge, (whether externally or internally derived,) will be our faith; and as our faith is, so will be our worship: and the truer our knowledge is, the truer will be our worship, if accompanied with the obedience of faith.

Now God has revealed Himself to mankind in divers manners and in different measures, according to the circumstances in which we have been found, or have placed ourselves; but all his dealings towards us have been with the intent of either leading us nearer to Himself, or preventing us by certain barriers from departing further from Himself. Of these dispensations, let us now more particularly refer to the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. The former and the latter of these appear to be more nearly allied *in spirit* than the Mosaic, and it is quite a matter of doubt whether we ever should have witnessed such a formal, and we may almost say cumbrous, framework of Rites and Ceremonies as is specified in "the Law," had there been a faithful adherence to *what was revealed before the law was given*.

The first recorded *acts of worship* in the Scriptures are those of Cain and Abel. They both, it may be safely presumed, were blessed with the same amount of external revelation through the medium of their father and mother; and it is evident, from the expostulation of God with Cain, they were also

equally favoured by God with an inward manifestation of His own free grace and power, such as He was pleased to reveal internally in that early period of the world's history. The one improved that which was confided to him; the other did not. Abel was *consequently* a righteous man, and Cain was also accordingly a wicked man. This is fully borne out by the Apostle's language: "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and those of his brother righteous" (1 John iii. 12). The word *works* being in the plural in both cases, shows that it had reference to more than one act. It is said of these brothers that in process of time they both brought an offering unto the Lord: and the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, by which He testified that he was *previously* a righteous man (see Hebrews xi. 4): but unto Cain, and to his offering, He had not respect; thus openly testifying that in his case the worshipper was *in spirit* a wicked man, though he had brought an offering unto the Lord; and yet, by the subsequent expostulation of the Lord with him, we may learn he was not beyond recovery, if he would do well, and with full purpose of heart turn to God.

Now this may be regarded as a symbol for all succeeding generations, illustrative of that truth of which Jesus testified,—that they who worship God

must worship Him in spirit and in truth ; by which words, I believe, our Lord intended to convey, *not only* that it must be by the aid of the Spirit of God we should seek to worship, but *also* that worship in order to be acceptable to God must proceed *from our spirits*, and be in our spirits both true and *heart-felt*, and must be *correspondent* with our external offerings or deportment, whatsoever these may be.

Cain's *spirit* was not accordant with his offering ; the bent of his mind was not towards God ; his *heart* was not right in the sight of God ; and **THEREFORE** God who seeth the intents of the heart accepted him not. Abel's spirit on the contrary was inclined towards God, not only at the time of his offering, but previously, and probably to a great extent uniformly ; the state of his heart was fairly and correctly expressed and represented by the deportment of his worship, and on that ground God accepted him, and testified that *his life* pleased Him.

We are too apt to look upon the offering of Cain and of Abel as that *one act* in their lives which was pleasing or non-pleasing to God ; whereas the acceptance and non-acceptance on the part of God was nothing more than a *sequence* : a consequence of the previous spirit of their lives for probably a considerable time : and it was not merely because one brought of the firstlings of the *flock*, and the

other of the fruits of the *ground*, they were either accepted or rejected;* for it is most likely that each brought of the *best* of his individual possessions, intending thereby to show the greatest mark of *external* respect: and had Cain's spirit or life corresponded with that act of worship, there can be no doubt that God would have accepted his offering equally with that of Abel, though it differed in kind: which should show us, that if the spirit of our minds be really inclined towards God, it signifies very little *what* the external rites or ceremonies are, provided in them all, or in the absence of any, we approach God in spirit, right, true, and intent upon Him; that is, if the spirit of our minds, and the intent of our hearts, be really, truly, and, as far as is possible, uniformly, bent on serving Him. We have, therefore, in this record two instances of worship; one true, the other false; and the characteristic features of each may be regarded as the true index of all succeeding acts of worship in the world, to determine which is true, and which false: and God has thus been pleased to inscribe upon the opening pages of the inspired writings, that He, who alone searches the hearts

* In making this statement I am fully prepared to admit that the spirit of Faith in Abel led him to select a lamb as the most appropriate sacrifice he could offer, in the shedding of whose blood he might have seen a type of the future sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God on Calvary.

and knows their secret intents, will accept the offerings of those worshippers whose inward disposition and spirit are correctly represented thereby, but that He will to the end of time reject those who draw nigh unto Him with the mouth, *whilst their hearts are far from Him.*

II. That there was some knowledge of God, and some communication of truth from Him in the Gentile world before the giving of the Mosaic Law, is clearly shown by the Apostle's argument in his Epistle to the Romans; and that there was also a LAW consequent upon this knowledge, to which mankind were responsible, and a breach of which implicated them in transgression, is equally evident: hence such expressions as these: "They are without excuse, because that *when they knew God* they glorified Him not as God," "and their foolish heart was darkened," "and they *changed the glory* of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man;" "they *changed the truth* of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever;" "and as they did not like to *retain God* in their knowledge, God gave them over to an undiscerning mind," &c.; for if their hearts became darkened, and their minds reprobate, or more correctly, undiscerning, there must have been a time

previously when their hearts were enlightened, and their minds discerning, by which they were enabled to know God, and to glorify Him as God.

It is indisputably clear also that this Law, now referred to, was not only orally or traditionally handed down from one to another, but that it partook also of an inwardly-imparted character, and was in fact an internal manifestation of the grace and Spirit of God revealed to each, and capable of being honoured or despised by each; hence, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; *for God hath showed it unto them;*" . . . again, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are *a law* unto themselves; which show the work of the law *written in their hearts*, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another;" and it is herein that the character of this Law is more nearly allied in spirit to that of the Christian dispensation, than is the Mosaic.

It was in consequence of disobedience to this Law, and the lapsed state of the world resulting therefrom, that God singled out one man, blessed him, and increased him above all the families of the earth, that from him might spring a nation, among whom might be retained a sufficient knowledge of God, to prevent the whole world from

once more becoming corrupt before Him, and in whose seed all the nations of the earth might eventually be blessed in the fulness of time. Hence Paul, writing to the Galatians, says, "The law was added *because of transgressions*, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made;" and in the giving of this Law by Moses do we for the first time hear of *forms of worship prescribed by God*, as conservative of a certain amount of true religion in the earth. This ritual was not intended to supersede that previous revelation of God before referred to, spoken of also by Moses as "the word very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart" (Deut. xxx. 14); but to be helpful to it, that by its means a seed might be kept alive, who should be preserved from falling into idolatry, and who might rise above the *servitude* of the Law, into some measure of the liberty of the law of the Spirit of God.

In the giving of "the Law," the event fully justified the foreknowledge of God, in showing that the people were not in a state to receive the knowledge of the will of God *without a medium*; for when they witnessed His immediate presence on Mount Sinai, they removed and stood afar off, saying unto Moses, "Speak *thou* with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exod. xx. 19). Consequently we find the ordinances and statutes of the Law exactly suited to a

people who positively required *an intervention* of some kind between themselves and God, because they could not bear the immediate manifestation of God; and when we consider the true destiny and capacity of man, and that he was originally created to hold immediate communion with God, there can be no greater proof of the weakness and unprofitableness of the Law; for in it were ordained institutions requiring a human priesthood to mediate between the people and their God, and through whom alone they might present their offerings. Nevertheless one of the obvious intentions of the Law was to preserve in the earth the worship of the One True God; and if this could not be effected except by means of such numerous statutes and ordinances as were prescribed therein, it proves that the people were not in a state to receive a purer and more inward manifestation of the mind and will of God.

But in process of time instead of God being worshipped *by means of* these rites and ceremonies, it came to pass that the so-called worship of God was made to consist in the mere observance of the institutions, regardless of the spirit and inward aim of the worshippers; and thus once more was witnessed a species of "Cain-worship," which, whilst it continued to bring thousands of sacrifices and burnt offerings, all duly prescribed by the

ordinances of God, was *at heart* far removed from the Living God. (See Psalm l. 7-15; also Isaiah lxvi. 3.)

Then it was that God testified to his people Israel through the prophets: "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them:" and again,—“This people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me; but they have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:" and so manifestly was this the case at the coming of our Lord, that they, who made the greatest outward show of observing the Mosaic Law, were the farthest removed from the Kingdom of God; and publicans and harlots were more receptive of the truth than the proud self-righteous Pharisee; and the very people who had been so highly honoured above all the families of the earth, in order that they might preserve the knowledge of God in the earth, were they who crucified the Lord of life and glory, their own actual and long-expected Messiah, when he did appear among them!

III. But now the hour had arrived when neither to Jerusalem nor to Mount Gerizim were men to go to worship the Father; but the true tabernacle was being reared, not made with hands, wherein

God could be worshipped without any outward intervention, and at all times and places.

MAN IS THE TRUE TEMPLE OF GOD.

Wherefore when Christ came into the world it was necessary for Him to be made flesh, that He might condemn sin in the flesh, and restore man to that position of immediate communion with God which he enjoyed when he was first created, and that He might re-erect in the *heart* of man that perpetual altar which ought never to have been broken down, by which this communion was intended eternally to exist. Hence it is said of Him by the spirit of prophecy, "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me ; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure ; then said I, Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God !" and thus He took away the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, *which was contrary to us*, nailing it to his cross, and in his own person established the New Covenant. In doing this, though there was not one jot or tittle of the *spirit* and *intent* of the outward Law which He did not fulfil, it is evident that He was continually accused of breaking the *letter* of that Law ; and He himself distinctly stated, that some portions of it were ordained solely on account of the *hardness* of the people's *hearts* ; which yields us an additional reason, that if their

hearts had not become hard, such portions of the outward Law would have been altogether needless, and in fact would not have been given.

May we not gather from this, that the closer we live in communion of spirit with God (by which our spirits would necessarily be tender and receptive of God), the less need there is of external rites and ceremonies whereby to approach unto Him? And if this be granted, does not the consequence necessarily present itself, that the "needs-be" of ceremonial worship arises from a corresponding amount of departure in spirit from the living God? Or that it is engaged in by those that are spiritual, purely in condescension to the state of others, whose position requires some such intervention?

If this be the case, may we not see *the reason* for that amount of external ministrations which certainly did exist in the early Christian church? And though these were of a superior order and character to any outward observances which we witness in these days, being chiefly "diversities of gifts by the One Spirit," they were, nevertheless, ranked by the Apostle as pertaining to an imperfect and childish state, and destined to be done away when that which is perfect should have come.

We cannot doubt that some, perhaps many, did arrive at such an advanced state, as not to need

any external means of learning the knowledge of the will of God : that they did attain to that more excellent way of dwelling in love, which is dwelling in God, by which they saw to the end of all ministrations, except such as were purely spiritual, and acting immediately in and on their own spirits : and if they did continue to observe any outward institutions, it was only in deference to those of their brethren who had not yet arrived so far : even as Paul circumcised Timothy, " because of the Jews which were in those quarters ;" and purified himself in the temple, " because of the thousands of Jews who believed, who were zealous for the Law of Moses : " but wherever the ground for so condescending to these things was perverted into a necessity to observe them in order to salvation, and *means* were thus changed into an *ultimatum*, no one was more strenuous than this same apostle in testifying against such an abuse.

When, as was the case with the brazen serpent, that which, though originally *divinely appointed* as a means of recovery, was perverted into an object of worship, and had been erected as such in the temple at Jerusalem, Hezekiah brought it out thence, and broke it in pieces ; so have some dealt with those external institutions of the Christian church, which, though at first they might have been appointed to lead into the Truth, yet when

they became perverted from their original intent, and were set up as things to be attended to, "without which there can be no salvation," thus exalting them to a level with Christ our only Saviour, they have with good and justifiable reason to their own minds dispensed with them altogether, testifying against such abuse by total discontinuance! Is there not an analogy in these two cases? And may it not be said of these, as was said of circumcision by Paul, "Circumcision is nothing, and *uncircumcision* is nothing, but the keeping the commandments of God?" So may not we say, "Ordinances are nothing, and the *non-observance* of them is nothing, if the new creation in Christ Jesus be not progressing?" Nay! do they not become worse than nothing, something absolutely obstructive to the life of Christ in the soul, when we are deluded into the belief, that in the observance of these institutions we are doing all that is needful? And do they not tend to build up again that which Christ has thrown down—viz., a wall of separation between ourselves and God—when we set apart an order of men to administer the same, without whose services we think they cannot be rightly and savingly performed? Is not this a turning again to the weak and beggarly elements, raising barriers where none need exist, placing a *medium* other than Christ between us and the

Father, instead of rejoicing in the liberty where-with He has set his people free?

IV. But let us proceed to inspect more closely this "liberty" which concerns ourselves the most deeply, viz., the Christian dispensation in which we live, the full blessings of which we *may* enjoy. I say, "may enjoy;" because it is possible, whilst living in the age of this dispensation, to fall short of the abundant riches which have been purchased for us by Him who is the Captain of our salvation, and to take up our rest in positions analogous to some of those varied dispensations which preceded the coming of Christ in the flesh.

Jesus being Himself the founder and perpetual sustainer of our faith, let us refer to his life and doctrine, and see what and how He taught, and what Law He recognized as the guide of his actions, the intent of his heart, the aim of his spirit. And all may be summed up in one other sentence of that prophetic psalm from which we have before quoted: "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm xl. 8). In strict accordance with this, our Lord spoke from the heart, to the heart, and of the heart.

"From the heart:" and inasmuch as His was the heart of God, we repeatedly hear Him utter such expressions as these: "As my Father hath

taught me, I speak these things:" "The word that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works:" "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do."

"To the heart." From this indwelling Godhead He spoke to the secret hidden states of those who conversed with Him: to Nathaniel, in allusion probably to the ardent desires of his soul poured out under the fig-tree, when no mortal eye or ear was nigh: to the woman of Samaria, of the relation between herself and him "who was not her husband," which they were evidently concealing from all around them: and this He did, "because he knew what was in man, and needed not that any should tell him."

"Of the heart:" when He said, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me."—"I am meek and lowly in heart."—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

This was our Lord's doctrine, and this his life: but it may be asked, How does it concern our subject?—What bearing has all this on worship or ordinances?—We have before observed that worship is the sequence of faith, and that faith is based on

knowledge or revelation ; and if in our Lord's case this knowledge or revelation is shown to have been *immediately* derived, the very nature or character of the worship He came to manifest must necessarily be affected thereby : and henceforward the truest worship was seen to partake of the character of NON-INTERVENTION as between man and God ; because the very knowledge on which it was based was declared capable of being derived immediately from God, by the operation or indwelling of his Spirit in the heart.*

But may we presume to hope to walk by any such power or spirit, as that which actuated our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ ? May we expect in any degree to manifest the same life which He Himself exhibited ? Why, this was precisely *one*

* It is worthy of notice that in the accounts of the four Evangelists we never hear of Jesus personally presenting any offerings through the Levitical priesthood ; we read of his charging others to show themselves to the Priests, and of his going up to the feasts of the Jews at Jerusalem, also of his keeping the Passover with his disciples ; but as regards the Passover it is a remarkable fact, that it required *not* the official interference of the Priests, either to kill or to prepare. It was instituted before the Levitical priesthood was appointed, and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel was concerned in the killing and eating of it : and when we remember what it was designed to typify, even Christ our passover, slain for us, and to be partaken of by us, these two points, viz., the non-intervention of the Priests, and the whole assembly eating it, should be distinctly borne in mind, and may suitably be referred to in passing, as bearing on our present subject.

object of our Lord's coming in the flesh ; that He might consecrate FOR US that new and living way into the holiest by his own blood ; that through Him we might have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and might act, as indicated by the disciple, who was privileged to lean his head on that Divine yet human breast : " He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also *so to walk, even as he walked.*" What ! The same spring for all our thoughts, words, and actions ? The same blessed object to aim at, viz., the glory of God, which even the only begotten Son expressed in these words,—"*Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee?*" The same possibility of speaking to the hearts of our fellow-creatures, in spite of all their attempts to conceal what may there be passing ? The same conviction of the soul, that the Lord seeth the heart, to be manifested in our daily walk and conversation ? The same unspeakably blessed privilege of approaching unto his God and his Father without the intervention of any outward priesthood, or statutes and ordinances of human or even divine appointment ? We may answer, but should do so with the profoundest humility and reverence ; It may be even so, *in measure* : and to live thus, is to live under the Christian dispensation, and to partake of its richest blessings and provisions : then every action of our lives would be an act of worship,

and our whole being would be consecrated to the service of Him who has redeemed us. Do we require additional proof? We have it abundantly in our Lord's own words: "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth or feedeth on me, even he shall live by me."

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

If we need yet further proof, we have it in the lives of those who have pressed through all obstacles, and been brought to worship God in spirit and in truth; the apostle Paul for instance:—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." We need not go so far back; we have abundant evidence of the same thing, though in smaller measure, I grant, in the lives of many who, after wearying themselves out with external observances, and seeking relief from the teachings of men, have still yearned for a nearer, closer communion with God; and their panting souls have not rested until they found Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write; and in finding Him they found God, and have been brought into oneness and fellowship with God; and then their ardent spirits have rested,

only to be incited to more intense longings, as the infinitude of His goodness has been revealed to them more and more, by this nearer and more immediate approach to the contemplation of His holiness ; and by the appreciation and insight they consequently obtain of His purposes of love to the children of men : and it is this foretaste of the great ultimatum which has caused some to dispense with all intermediate ordinances and rituals, that they might worship the Father in Spirit and Truth, from the inmost depth of their own spirits, and at all times and places : and the same result, in a greater or smaller degree, will be produced in all who are led *individually* to look unto the Lord alone as their expectation, and who confiding in the teaching of their Saviour,—the great and only Intercessor between God and Man,—do, by His Spirit, become changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the Lord, the Spirit.

And so we, in thus being conformed unto Christ, instead of being led away from the true, the only foundation, the alone name given among men by which we can be saved, shall be found being builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit ; and our superstructure will comport, *in degree*, with the nature of the precious and chief-corner-stone thereof ; and our works and

worship, instead of being composed of materials which cannot abide the fire, and which will not exist in the Eternal World, will be found to the praise and glory of Him who has redeemed us, when all that which is in part shall have passed away, or waxed old. And as Christ, exalted at the right hand of the Father in glory, has identified himself with the being of all those who believe in him, in these words:—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, *ye have done it unto me*;" and even more fully so with those who are persecuted for his name's sake, in these words to Saul of Tarsus,—“I am Jesus, *whom thou persecutest*;" so we, whilst travelling through this world, surrounded with its duties as well as its cares, and possibly pressed down by its contradictions, may receive a life, which is none other than Christ's; and though this be hidden under the vail of our mortality, it is, nevertheless, radiant with the glory that is at God's right hand, but at present only spiritually discerned.

If this were to become more truly our HEART-RELIGION, we should know more fully the meaning of the words, “Christ, who is our life;” and we should manifest something of the life exhibited by our Lord when in the flesh: we should, *in degree*, love, as he loved; forgive, as he forgave; do good, as he did it; endure reproach, as he endured;

speak, as he spake ; pray, as he prayed ; and, far more frequently than now, seek the glory of God as the sole object of all our actions ; and *whatsoever we did*, animated by His blessed Spirit, would be done in the true spirit of worship to the Unseen God. This is the Christianity, and this the confession of the name of Jesus, which we should hold forth before the world ; and the world would in its turn, all the sooner, believe that God had indeed sent His Son into it, to save it ; and many, many more would be brought to believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, the glory of the Father. If this were indeed our constant aim and practice, and the life of Christ thus became “ our life ;” it would not greatly signify what external observances, what forms of worship, what peculiarities, were added thereto ; but to be without the life and spirit and power of Christ in the soul, it then would not matter how many nor how varied were our ordinances, our offerings, our singularities,—all would be but as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal ; and though we were to give all our goods to feed the poor, and our very bodies to be burned, we should find,—when alas too late !—that we were nothing profited.

May the Lord our God send forth more and more of the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, that we may be preserved from so fearful an alterna-

tive ; that we may be no longer *servants* under any previous dispensation, but attain to the liberty wherewith Christ setteth his people free, even the glorious liberty of the children of God ; and when this shall be openly manifested,—a period for which the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together until now,—then shall we also appear with Christ in glory ; and the life, His life, which has been hid in this world, save to those who could spiritually discern it, will burst forth and shine to the praise and glory and honour of God, and to our eternal joy ; for we, seeing Jesus as He is, shall be like Him ; and shall AS CHILDREN shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of OUR FATHER.

V. This reference to our great Future naturally leads us to look at our subject in yet another aspect, and that a most important one. We shall all admit that the truest way in which we can worship God in this world must be that which will most nearly resemble the way in which He will be worshipped eternally in the heavenly kingdom ; in accordance with our Lord's words when teaching his disciples how to pray : "Thy will be done in earth, *as it is in heaven.*"

Now in Apocalyptic vision John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her

husband, and he heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." This very city is called "The Bride, the Lamb's wife," and is in fact the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. It is spoken of also by Paul as the "Jerusalem which is above, and is free, which is the mother of us all." This is that city, whose builder and maker is God; that holy temple in which we are builded together whilst in this world for a habitation of God through the Spirit; in which an inheritance will be granted to all who have been "made meet to be partakers" thereof, during their pilgrimage through this life; thus, (if we use the Apostle's other metaphor,) proving their *consanguinity* to it whilst here below.

Now we can conceive of no way in which we can be fitted and prepared to participate in the joys of that city, than that of having implanted within us *here* some present possession of the laws and privileges of that kingdom; and in this sense it is that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy:" for he who most faithfully holds and exhibits the testimony of Jesus will be he, who, at the same time, and in that very way, most truly depicts and represents what shall be hereafter; and thus he

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becomes a living practical prophet: therefore, among other things, he will in his measure also prefigure or foreshow the nature and character of *the worship* of that holy city, the New Jerusalem.

As regards that city and its worship, it is strikingly declared by John, when gazing on its transcendent glory,—“AND I SAW NO TEMPLE THEREIN; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” Is it not therefore clear that they, who are being made meet in this world to dwell and worship in that city, will, as they advance in their progress, be prepared more and more to dispense with any other temple service than that of THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY AND THE LAMB, and thus anticipate in degree their final, their eternal inheritance? We cannot doubt that they will be brought,—by slow and gradual means perchance,—to leave behind them all first principles, even of the doctrine of Christ; and thus “be borne on” towards perfection: otherwise, if admitted within the precincts of that city, they would experience a dis-harmony of spirit, which would at once disqualify them from fully appreciating and enjoying the glory of their inheritance.

VI. Let us dwell a little longer on this subject. Whereas this city, the New Jerusalem, is also called “the Bride, the Lamb’s wife;” the reason

will be obvious why allusion has been made in some foregoing remarks to the life of Christ in the flesh ; and the necessity of there being some conformity wrought in us to his life ; for, if there were *no similarity of nature* begotten in the Church to Him who redeemed it with his precious blood, “ that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,” there could be no affinity nor concord in spirit between her and her divine Bridegroom, when the marriage of the Lamb shall take place ! but instead thereof there would be discord and contrariety of spirit ; hence it is that we are sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by Christ’s word, that we may be freed from all filthiness and imperfection of the flesh and spirit, and so perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

And if, in this process, any should feel themselves drawn off from some things which may have formerly proved both useful and necessary to them, it would be well for these to yield to the heavenly impulse, as they may thereby be brought into nearer and closer fellowship of spirit with Him, who *for our sakes* is jealous of his honour, and willeth not that we give His glory to any other. If this were more generally understood, it would yield a balm to the aching hearts of many who are ready to

think, that because they do not find the same comfort in some things that have aforetime been without doubt blessed to them, therefore that God is angry with them, and has hid His face from them; whereas their trouble and sorrow may arise from the very leadings of the good Shepherd; who seeks thus to humble them, and suffers them to hunger, (yet who is nevertheless feeding them with food that they understand not,) that He might make them know that "man liveth not by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (See Deut. viii. 3).

Oh! happy shall we be, if we so far anticipate our eternal future, as, whilst living in this world, to be "taught of God Himself:" that it may be said of us even here, "Ye are the temple of the living God; as God has said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi. 16); for thus, and thus only, can we be brought into correspondence with that which was said of the holy Jerusalem, when John saw it descending out of heaven from God,—“Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, and be their God:” and thus

only can we share in the blessedness of those who shall be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, when that which is written in "the true sayings of God" shall be accomplished; viz.,—
"And his wife hath made herself ready."

VII. In penning these thoughts the writer trusts it will be seen his object is not so much to speak against ordinances, as to show their weakness and inability to answer the cravings of our inmost souls, and the capacity we individually possess for immediate communion of spirit with God: and that whenever they have been permitted or instituted, it has been indicative of a position occupied by those to whom they have been given, short of that which might have been attained, in yielding to the full though gradual teachings of the Spirit of Truth; consequently, short of that which it is the good pleasure and purpose of God we should realize.

To those who still conscientiously believe in the use of external forms and ceremonies, he has desired to show, that it is not the rites and ordinances of their respective churches which commend their worship as acceptable to God, but that it is the spirit and intent of heart in which they observe them: and he would ask such not to judge those harshly, who, on the other hand, as conscientiously

believe they have been led to dispense with all outward observances. And these latter he would fraternally caution not to put their confidence in the fact that they have dismissed all rituals, and abrogated all ordinances ; for it is possible to testify against forms out of other than *living ground*, and to subside into a silence which, instead of being fraught with the life-giving presence of God, shall betoken only that of sleep or death.

Let us all rather seek to live unto God, and, as the Apostle advised with respect to days and meats,—“ Let every man be fully persuaded or assured in his own mind : ” therefore, if any regard ordinances, let them regard them unto the Lord ; and if they regard them not, let it be unto the Lord that they thus regard them not : so that none of us may live unto himself, but unto Him who died for us and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living.

But there is one other class to whom a few words may be said ; viz., those who, though they themselves see to the end of all external rites and ceremonies, yet continue to observe them, avowedly, *purely for the sake of their brethren* for whom Christ died. If this be really their genuine and pervading motive, I would not condemn such for so doing ; nor would I seek to rob them of this method of showing forth the spirit of their Lord, who condescended

to our weaknesses and infirmities of the flesh and spirit, to an infinitely greater extent than ever we can follow him: and who did this, that He might redeem us from every phase of distance and separation from God, and that He might make in Himself one new man; that through Him all might have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and be no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. May the Lord grant that this be our happy lot, in time and eternity!

And oh! may the Spirit of the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb be so much the more abundantly poured forth upon, and shed abroad in, the already awakened Church, that she “rest not, and hold not her peace day nor night,” until she become that “crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and that royal diadem in the hand of her God,” which shall express the invitation of her once crucified, but now RISEN LORD, to the world around her, *in the same correspondence with the Spirit, and in the same fulness and freeness*, originally intended to be conveyed in the words—

“And the Spirit AND THE BRIDE say, COME,”

AND WHOSOEVER WILL,

Let him take the water of life, FREELY.”

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